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Remarks

Claims 26 through 32, 37 through 49, and 51 through 53 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hartzell in view of Vaidya et. al. and any of Witman '826, Ochi et. al. EP '697 and Wagner '055. Claim 33 is rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Flood '870 in view of Vaidya et. al. Claims 34 through 36 and 50 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hartzell, Vaidya et. al. and any one of Witman, Ochi et. al. and Wagner as applied to claims 26 and 43, in further view of Valle DE '910. Claims 37 through 42 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hartzell, Vaidya et. al. and any one of Witman, Ochi et. al. and Wagner as applied to claim 26 and in further view of Ogata US '969.

In responding to these rejections, the Applicant has amended claim 26 to include the limitations of claim 34 which has accordingly been cancelled. Former claim 34 has been slightly modified to directly recite the decorative layers in a generic sense, and not the wooden veneer limitation of intervening claim 32. Claim 43 has also been amended to include the limitations of claim 50 which has accordingly been cancelled.

The limitations of claims 34 and 50, which are now incorporated in amended independent claims 26 and 43, recite a fiber layer interposed between the decorative layer and the carrier. The Examiner has submitted that DE '910 due to Valle teaches this limitation. However, the Valle publication is merely concerned with reinforcement of duroplastic glue layers. In contrast thereto, the fiber layer in accordance with the invention prevents the softened or liquefied thermoplastic polymer matrix of the carrier from passing through the thin decorative layer to be noticeable on

the visible side thereof. Such a "soaking through" would be unsightly and must be avoided when using a decorative layer. This problem is not addressed by the '910 publication of Valle, since Valle uses the fiber layer in conjunction with a duroplastic resin to connect together and reinforce adjacent wooden plates. In contrast to the invention, the fabric of Valle is saturated and impregnated with the liquid resin prior to combination with the wooden plates. This contrasts sharply with the procedure in accordance with the invention, since the inventive fiber layer serves as a barrier to prevent the soft thermoplastic polymer of the carrier from passing through the decorative layer during the pressing procedure, while nevertheless allowing it to reach the rear side of the that layer in order to effect the glue-free connection.

For the reasons mentioned above, the invention discloses features not suggested by the prior art having advantages which are similarly not taught by that prior art. The invention as now amended is therefore sufficiently distinguished from the prior art of record to satisfy conditions for patenting in the United States. Passage to issuance is therefore requested.

No new matter has been added in this amendment.

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Respectfully submitted,

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